Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues

Honorable Elaine McCoy
Minister Responsible for Women's Issues
104 Legislature Building
Edmonton, Alberta
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I am pleased to present you with the first Annual Report of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues, for the period of November 13, 1986 to March 31, 1987.

The report covers all activities and business of the Council for this period, and provides an outline of the Council's establishment.

Sincerely,

Margaret Leahey

Margaret Leahey
Chairperson
Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues

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Message From the Chairperson

This is the first Annual Report of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues. It covers only a short four-and-a-half month period during the developing months of the Council. This however, was a productive time — an orientation meeting of the Council was held in November, and three business meetings were held in December, February, and March. As well, the Council organized and held its first public meeting. These meetings, in addition to ongoing Council activities, follow a stated commitment of the Council to consult and communicate extensively with Albertans on priority issues of concern.

The process of developing recommendations to present to Government on behalf of Alberta women was underway. From the outset, public expectations were high; it was easy to understand why. The push for the Council's establishment had been a long and consistent one by numerous women in the province.

Finally, in November 1986 the Council was officially established with members from throughout the province appointed to serve for terms varying from one to three years. The Council would be on a firm legislative foundation with the passage of its own Act — Bill 19. This new Act was the result of a thorough legislative review process of the Government's first legislative proposal for the Council, announced several months earlier. The review of that first proposal not only produced Bill 19 but a clear mandate for the new Council.

Bill 19 states that "the purpose of the Advisory Council is to advise and report to the Alberta Government through the Minister on matters relating to the opportunity for full and equal participation of Alberta women in the life of the province." With an estimated population of 864,000 women over the age of 15 in this province, women form a significant population of economic, social and ethnic diversity. The Alberta Advisory Council aims to hear Alberta women — with their broad range of views and concerns, for women's issues are clearly societal issues. The Council supports the betterment of all women in our province. We are all believers in equality.

The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues also stands behind the philosophy that women are strong, capable individuals. Some, however, need and seek the necessary confidence and support to help them realize their potential. We believe that women, like those who serve on Council, are not afraid of challenges. We have only to look around us, throughout our cities, in our communities, and on our farms, to prove this philosophy true.

Over the past months, the Council has met with Albertans and received many calls, letters, and visits from people committed to the Council's goals and objectives. There is a growing awareness and understanding of the Council's role and mandate. As a young Council, one of the newest in the country, we realize there are still many challenges ahead. As Chairperson, I have pledged on behalf of the Council to devote my time, energies, and abilities to ensure we fulfill our mandate in a manner consistent with the high standards women in our province deserve.

Margaret Leahey
Chairperson
Alberta Advisory Council on
Women's Issues

Council Profiles

The appointment of the Chairperson, Margaret Leahey, was made in April 1986. The remaining 14 members were appointed to the Council on November 13, 1986. The Council's composition reflects the government's desire to ensure a broad range of expertise and life experience, in addition to a balance of views. Strong regional representation on Council was also ensured. The Council is determined to be an effective voice in its recommendations to government by focusing on the needs and concerns of Alberta women.

Margaret Leahey — Council Chairperson

Margaret Leahey
Edmonton
Margaret Leahey was appointed Chairperson of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues on April 7, 1986. Her appointment followed a 14-year career in journalism, covering issues ranging from Federal/ Provincial affairs to health care, social services, education, energy, finance and agriculture. She has worked in all facets of the media as a reporter, producer, columnist and editor. She has been involved in various community activities and was recently elected president of the Economics Society of Northern Alberta. Margaret is married and is the mother of two children.

Lori Andreachuk
Lethbridge
Lori is a lawyer/mediator who practises as a partner in a Lethbridge law firm. In addition to her law degree, obtained from the University of Alberta, Lori holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from the University of Lethbridge. Lori's practice includes: divorce and family law, civil litigation, and divorce mediation. She teaches law and lectures on various legal issues at the Lethbridge Community College, University of Lethbridge, and for the Law Society of Alberta. Lori is a member of the Board of the Lethbridge Rehabilitation Society and the Law Society of Alberta Mediation Committee.

Wendy Church
Red Deer
Wendy is manager of a travel agency and has experience owning and operating small businesses. Wendy has been actively involved in a variety of community activities, including the Board of Governors of the Red Deer College, the Red Deer United Way Board, and Junior Achievement. She is founder of the Red Deer Business Women's Network.

Olga Cylurik
Edmonton
Olga is a former President of the Edmonton Local Council of Women and has recently served as its Legislative Chairperson. Additionally, Olga has been a committee member on the Edmonton Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect. Olga has been an active volunteer in numerous community and non-profit organizations, including the Edmonton Art Gallery and the Christian Church Women's Group. She is married and the mother of two daughters.

Kathryn Habberfield
Langdon
Kathryn is a member and former President of the Alberta Women's Institute. In addition to her involvement with this organization, Kathryn has served on an advisory board for the District Agriculturalist, volunteered her time on an advisory board for the Wheat Pool and is a member of the Board of the district Unifarm. Kathryn also works in a part-time retail sales position.

Brigit Hawkins
Alberta Beach
Brigit teaches art classes in Edmonton. She is an active member of the Federation of Canadian/ Alberta Artists, the 7 Arts Club, the Arts and Crafts Society, and the Erase-A-Lots Arts Club. Brigit has also served as President of the Alberta Beach Chamber of Commerce. She has worked as a volunteer for many organizations and has 30 years work experience in administration, public relations, and personnel.

Nancy Louis
Hobbema
Nancy is the Executive Director of Hobbema Indian Health Services and is responsible for supervising and co-ordinating all the public health programs, including alcohol and drug abuse treatment and child welfare. She holds a diploma in psychiatric nursing. Nancy has been responsible for establishing day-care centres on the Hobbema Reserve. In addition to her activities in the social and health care fields, Nancy owns and operates a small business on the Hobbema Reserve.

Elva Mertick
Calgary
Elva is an education consultant and sessional instructor with the Social Welfare Department of the University of Calgary. She also maintains a private practice as a social worker and has extensive community involvement in family, youth, and health associations. Elva is a member of the editorial board with the Palliative Care Foundation of Canada.

Lucy Milne
Medicine Hat
Lucy has been a professional educator for 41 years, the major portion of which was spent as a business education teacher, department head, and guidance counsellor in Medicine Hat High School. She was also employed by the Alberta Department of Education as a Regional Office Consultant in Business Education. She is a past president of both the Canadian and Alberta Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs and served as southeastern Alberta representative on the Alberta Teachers' Association Provincial Executive Council.

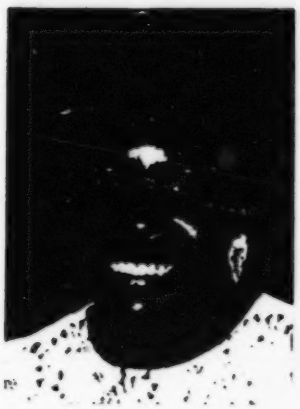
An active member of her community, Lucy has served on the board of the United Way, Red Cross Youth, and the senate of the University of Calgary.

Pam Sidhu
Calgary
Pam began her medical training at the Punjab University in India and emigrated to Canada in 1975. She pursued her medical career as a physician at the Nova Scotia Hospital and later at the Toronto Eastern General Hospital, where she interned. She is now a resident with the Department of Psychiatry, Foothills Hospital, Calgary. Pam is a homemaker and the mother of two.

Deanna Sidoruk
Grimshaw
Deanna is a homemaker and works as both a secretary and bookkeeper in her family business in Grimshaw. She is an active volunteer in her community, particularly so with the minor hockey and local figure skating associations. Deanna is married and the mother of two children.

Janet Slaughter
Fort McMurray
Janet is employed as an educational consultant in Fort McMurray. Additionally, Janet is the proprietor of a calligraphy studio for graphic arts and design and a trustee on the board of the Fort McMurray Regional Hospital. She is also a member of the Alberta Press Council. Janet is married and the mother of four children.

Hazel Smith
Olds
Hazel is a homemaker who also works regularly with her husband in their consulting business. Because of her recent move to a farm, she has taken a special interest in rural issues. She is a member of the Alexander Writer's Centre. She was appointed a member of the Alberta Advisory Committee on the Family in 1984 and was involved in compiling a report on private adoption practices in Alberta. Hazel is also an active volunteer with the local school system.



Bernadette Swan
Edmonton
Bernadette emigrated from the Republic of Guyana to Canada in 1963. A professional home economist, Bernadette has devoted much of her time to improving the status of domestic workers in Alberta. She has been involved in a variety of research projects addressing the needs of immigrant women in Alberta and was responsible for establishing the first library west of Ottawa that specializes in materials related to black people. Bernadette is also the past president of the Black Women's Association of Alberta and has worked to propagate the history and culture of black people by organizing cultural exhibitions.

Leah Waters
Lethbridge
Leah is actively involved in the business community, owning and operating an aerobics studio. She is also involved on a volunteer basis in health and fitness programs in Lethbridge. A graduate in Human Biology from the University of Alberta, Leah has lived and worked in Toronto, Taber, and Lethbridge. She is the past vice-chairman of the Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce and also serves on the Lethbridge Community College Advisory Committee for the Lethbridge Community College Fitness Centre.

Council in the Making

The 1970 Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women recommended that advisory councils on the status of women be created at provincial and federal levels to advise their respective governments on issues of concern to women. Following the Royal Commission's recommendations, advisory councils were created at the federal level in 1973 and at most provincial levels within the past 12 years.

During the past decade, women's groups in Alberta worked for the establishment of a provincial women's advisory council. In the past few years, a coalition of approximately 40 women's organizations intensified this effort.

On April 7, 1986 the Government of Alberta fulfilled its promise to create an advisory council when the Honourable Dick Johnston, then Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, announced the formation of the Council. The Minister also announced Margaret Leahey as the first Chairperson of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues.

Legislation — Bill 19

One of the major highlights in 1986 for the women of Alberta was the formal introduction in the provincial legislature of Bill 19, establishing the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues.

The First Initiative

On April 7, 1986, Bill 7, the **Women's Secretariat Act**, providing for the establishment of the Advisory Council, was introduced in the legislature. The Bill was given only first reading and was not passed before the 1986 provincial election was called.

During and following the election, women's groups and other organizations provided extensive input to the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues.

Most groups wanted a clear distinction between the Advisory Council and the Women's Secretariat and a separate Act for the Council. However, Bill 7 would have established the Advisory Council by an order-in-council, rather than through a legislative Act. Some women felt the Advisory Council would be stronger with a clearly legislated mandate and the sunset clause in Bill 7 was also strongly criticized.

The Next Step

On June 12, 1986 the newly-elected government reaffirmed its commitment to Alberta women by restating its intention to create an Advisory Council on Women's Issues.

After numerous discussions with various women's groups and other organizations concerned with Bill 7, the Chairperson of the Advisory Council forwarded recommendations to the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues. The recommendations were as follows:

- The Council should be called by its proper name. The title of Citizens' Advisory Body should be replaced and referred to as the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues.
- The Council should have its own Act, separate from the Secretariat Act, Bill 7.
- The Council should have the authority to undertake independent research when considered necessary by the Council or Government. This authority is very important as it ensures that Council recommendations to government can be based on full and detailed examination.
- The sunset clause should be reworded or removed.

Bill 19
The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act

On August 1, 1986, the Honourable Dennis Anderson introduced Bill 19, the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act, establishing the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues. Through this legislation, the Advisory Council has its own enabling statute. The Alberta Advisory Council was the first women's council in western Canada, and the fifth in Canada to be established by legislation. In establishing the Advisory Council by legislation, the government underlined its commitment and belief that such a council should exist on a solid legislative foundation.

Bill 19 differed from Bill 7 in other ways. Through Bill 19, the mandate of the Council was expanded so that the Council would advise and report to the Government on all matters pertaining to women, providing the opportunity for full and equal participation of women in the life of the province. Bill 19 also increased the size of the Council from 11 to 15 members, allowing for increased regional representation. The Council's operation was established for a full 10 years, when an independent review will determine the ongoing need for the Council. Thus the sunset clause in Bill 7 was reworded.

The Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act was reported to the Legislature on September 9, 1986.

Council Mandate

The purpose of the Council is stated in the Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act ..."to advise and report to the Alberta Government through the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues on matters relating to the opportunity for full and equal participation of Alberta women in the life of the province." The mandate is to be fulfilled by:

- identifying specific matters and issues relating to women that may be addressed by the Government;
- making recommendations to the Government with respect to any matters and issues relating to women;
- consulting with and providing information to the public; and
- carrying out any other activities that the Minister considers appropriate.

Goals and Objectives

The first major business of the Council was to develop a plan of action. Goals and objectives were developed in accordance with the Council's mandate serving as a stable structure from which the Council would work. The process of developing the goals and objectives was completed and approved by Council at its first business meeting on December 9-10, 1986.

Council Objective One

To identify specific matters and issues relating to women that may be addressed by the Government.

Method of Accomplishment:

- Maintain/develop liaison with Government, groups, and organizations.
- Attend meetings of groups and organizations.
- Attend and conduct workshops and educational conferences and seminars.
- Invite and receive written briefs, letters, and phone calls from groups, organizations, and individual Albertans.
- Establish Council committees.
- Compile, conduct, or initiate research.
- Review, study, and examine reports and studies of Government, agencies, and other bodies.

Council Objective Two

To develop and make recommendations to the Government with respect to any matters and concerns relating to women's issues.

Method of Accomplishment:

- Analyze representation received from women's groups, organizations, and individual Albertans on issues relating to women.
- Research Government policies and programs.
- Research policies, programs, and legislation relating to women, of other provincial governments and their women's councils, as well as the Federal Government and the national council.
- Develop and maintain ongoing files on above policies, programs, and legislation affecting women.
- Prepare position papers; priorize recommendations.

Council Objective Three
To promote public and Government awareness on issues of concern to women/Council activities.

Method of Accomplishment:
- Develop a communications policy/strategy.
- Make speeches to groups and organizations throughout the province.
- Develop a resource handbook for Alberta women on all programs and services available to women or relating to women.
- Produce a Council newsletter.
- Provide public information through booklets and pamphlets.
- Submit regular reports to Government on representation being received — written and verbal.
- Conduct/co-sponsor regional workshops.
- Conduct regional Council meetings.
- Establish policy on public reporting — media interviews to inform public about representatives, policies, programs, and initiatives.
- Assist groups in awareness programs.

Council Objective Four
To maintain effective liaison with the Minister/Government to ensure Council's recommendations on the concerns of women are reflected in Government policy.

Method of Accomplishment:
- Request and organize regular meetings between the Minister and the Council Chairperson.
- Invite Minister to informal gatherings of Council.
- Attend yearly private dinner with Provincial Cabinet and Premier.
- Respond to action requests from Minister/Government.
- Provide regular information/status reports to Minister.
- Provide advice and assistance to Minister/Government.
- Provide liaison with Women's Secretariat.

Council Objective Five
To maintain effective liaison, communication, and consultation with women's groups, organizations, and individual Albertans.

Method of Accomplishment:
- Maintain a current listing of women's groups and organizations within the province.
- Consult with women's organizations, community associations, and individual Albertans on issues of concern.
- Distribute Council newsletter to women's groups and organizations.
- Invite briefs and submissions to Council on issues of concern.
- Attend meetings of groups and organizations.
- Provide responsible referrals to women in need who contact Council office for assistance.
- Prepare and maintain records of communication.
- Organize yearly open house.
- Facilitate effective regional communication with groups in Council members' areas.
- Organize regional workshops for women.

Statement of Principle Regarding Need for Research
At the December 9-10, 1986 business meeting of Council, the ability of Council to undertake research was discussed. As a result, Council approved a statement of principle with regard to research: *"In order for the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues to fullfill its legislated mandate, it will research women's issues on an ongoing basis. The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues recognizes the importance of independent and credible research conducted on women's issues. The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues may also, if deemed feasible and warranted by the Council, conduct primary research."*

Taking Shape
The provincial office of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues was established in Edmonton on May 1, 1986. The office is centrally located in the downtown core of Edmonton.

Albertans visit the Council office for a variety of reasons: to discuss problems; express views on issues; seek information on programs and services available to women; or even to just browse through the library. It has gained popularity over the past months for its displays of brochures, pamphlets, briefs; and books on women, women's groups and organizations, and women's issues. Much of the information offered may be studied in the office, while other materials are distributed free of charge.

The office also has a collection of provincial newspaper and magazine articles organized according to the issue. In addition to issue binders, covering topics from abortion and employment to politics, violence, and welfare, are the issue files. These files also offer information of a variety of issues related to women. The issue binders

and issue files are kept up-to-date on a daily basis and depict the development of various issues in the province on a continuing basis.

Open House

The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues office operates in a friendly and receptive atmosphere.

To introduce the office to Albertans, an open house was held June 6, 1986. Invitations were issued, and a public notice of invitation was placed in newspapers. More than 300 people from various areas of the province and from different backgrounds attended this event. Edson, Hobbema, Drayton Valley, and Calgary were some of the areas represented. Groups represented ranged from the Canadian Council of Muslim Women and the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses to the Local Council of Women and the Women's Institutes.

Business of Council

Although Subsection 5 (3) of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act states, "With respect to the fiscal year ending March 31, 1987 the Advisory Council shall meet at least once," the Council held three business meetings during this time period.

December 9-10, 1986

At the first meeting, on December 9-10, 1986 the operating procedures of Council were decided, as well as goals and objectives and bylaws. More importantly, the priorization process of issues got underway, and a committee structure was set up to deal with specific issues.

The committees are:

- Policy Committee
- Health Care Committee
- Economics Committee
- Child Care Committee
- Violence Committee
- Seniors Commitee
- Native, Immigrant and Visible Minority Committee
- Homemakers Committee
- Education Committee

February 6-7, 1987

The February 6-7, 1987 meeting of Council focused on issues, with extensive discussions on such matters as women's health, including abortion. Furthermore, the Health Care; Economics; and Native, Immigrant, and Visible Minority Committees examined input received to date on issues relating to these subject areas.

It was decided that the first public meeting of Council would be held in March 1987 in Calgary in order to receive information and stimulate discussion on issues of concern to Alberta women.

March 30-31, 1987

On March 30, 1987 the Council held its first public meeting in Calgary. It focused on two major issues — women's health, dealing with such matters as preventive health care, abortion, and midwifery; and on Native, immigrant, and visible minority women's issues.

It was decided recommendations to the Government would be developed and released publicly by October 15, 1987.

A business meeting of Council was held on March 31 as follow-up to the public meeting. In addition to the business accomplished at the meeting, there were preliminary discussions about a comprehensive women and poverty research project, to be undertaken by the Council. As well, the March business meeting included approval for the Council to spearhead an unprecedented public forum and seminar on personal safety and sexual assault, to be held in Edmonton in June 1987.

Consultations

One of the major activities of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues is to meet and consult with women's groups and organizations, the general public, and Government officials throughout the province.

During the period of April 1986 to March 1987 the Chairperson made over 200 speaking and meeting engagements throughout Alberta.

Upcoming Projects

The Council is in the process of planning four projects for the fiscal period beginning April 1, 1987.

Council Meeting in Grande Prairie

Council agreed at its March 31, 1987 meeting to hold the next business meeting of Council in Grande Prairie in June 1987. In addition to this business meeting of Council, a public meeting was planned. This public meeting would focus on issues related to women and the economy. Council would hear briefs and presentations from Alberta individuals, organizations, and groups. The input received in the briefs would then be analyzed as part of the process of developing recommendations to the Provincial Government.

Personal Safety and Sexual Assault Seminar and Forum

The March 31, 1987 business meeting proposed the Council to spearhead a seminar and forum on the issue of personal safety and sexual assault against women. The event planned for June 1987 would involve influential and pertinent experts in addition to comprehensive workshops. Agencies the Council would ask to participate included the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton, the provincial RCMP "K" Division, and the Edmonton Police Department. The goal of the event would be to increase public awareness on issues related to violence against women.

Women and Poverty Project

The possibility of undertaking a major long-term research project on women and poverty was considered by Council. The purpose of the project would be to conduct a province-wide and comprehensive examination of the economic situation of women in Alberta and to analyze the impact of poverty upon the lives of Alberta women. The Council would then make the necessary recommendations to the Government regarding this issue.

Council Publications

Effective communication between the Council and the Alberta public is important. It is through communication and consultation that the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues can truly represent the women of this province and form an effective liaison between the Alberta public and its Government.

As part of its communications function, the Council produces special material, including brochures and an eight-page newsletter.

The newsletter, offered to all Albertans, provides information on the Council's development, structure, goals, and activities.